

issue. In fact, they have been overwhelmingly with us over the past 5 years. In fact, I see my friend from Iowa here and I applaud his efforts today in the House Agricultural Committee on Appropriations which included an amendment that would restrict funding for the Fish and Wildlife Service if such spring rise and split navigation zones were implemented.

I want to tell all of my colleagues in this House, Mr. Speaker, how deeply that we Missourians appreciate the support, especially because of recent developments in the Senate, and that we may need their undaunted courage in the very near future.

A DISCUSSION OF IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. Ross) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, today we passed a resolution to honor our troops in Bosnia. I personally want to thank the National Guard troops, our men and women in uniform. I want to especially recognize them today because they spend time away from their families and their jobs.

I know this because I have a neighbor in my hometown of Prescott, Arkansas, Kevin Smith, who is serving tonight in Bosnia through the National Guard while his wife remains home, pregnant, and continues to hold down a job. Our families make huge sacrifices so our men and women in the National Guard can serve our country and yes, serve Bosnia in this time of need and they do so with honor and dignity and I want to thank each and every one of them.

This is especially important to me because I have two National Guard units from my district, one from Magnolia and another from Sheridan, that are presently serving in Bosnia. My legislative assistant for military affairs has been there to visit with the troops. I wish I could have gone, but it was at a time when we had votes going on here in our Nation's capital. So I want to thank all of them. I want to thank them for this important service to our country and to Bosnia during this time of need.

Today we celebrate Juneteenth, something else that is important to me that I would like to visit with my colleagues about this evening. On this date in 1865, Major General Gordon Granger lead his troops into Galveston, Texas and officially proclaimed freedom for slaves for the State of Texas, concluding a 2½ year journey through the Deep South. Today I join African Americans and citizens of all races across Arkansas, across America, and across the world in celebrating Juneteenth in honor of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Presi-

dent Abraham Lincoln and Major General Granger's historic journey. African Americans have played an important role throughout America's history and we should all be grateful for their many, many contributions to our society.

Mr. Speaker, as we gather today with family, friends and neighbors in marking the tradition of Juneteenth, I extend my warmest wishes for a special celebration, one that we will remember, and I ask all citizens to renew our commitment to a nation that stands for civil justice and opportunity for all people.

Finally, this evening I would like to visit for a few minutes on the issue of energy. Mr. Speaker, as temperatures across the country heat up and this summer's travel season begins, our Nation finds itself in the midst of an energy crisis like one that has not been seen in 2 decades. While my constituents in south Arkansas have not had to face the electricity shortages that California has seen, like all Americans, they have been strapped by the dramatic rise in oil and gas prices.

The hardworking families of south Arkansas already struggle to make ends meet. Many of my constituents come from poor and rural areas where they depend on their cars or trucks to get to and from their jobs, oftentimes traveling many miles, or where they have large tractors and equipment to tend to their family farms. When already faced with the cost of feeding their families, paying their electricity bills, and paying for expensive prescription drugs to stay healthy and get well, they simply cannot afford these high gasoline costs.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we must act to bring these prices down, and we must do it now. Since this most recent increase in gasoline prices began, I, along with many of my colleagues in Congress, have written letters to energy Secretary Spencer Abraham as well as President Bush asking them to come to the aid of gasoline consumers by aggressively lobbying OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, to increase the production of oil or, as President Bush suggested last year, "open up their spigots" to help alleviate this problem, this crisis.

Just last March, OPEC decided arbitrarily to cut oil production by 4 percent in the countries that our men and women in uniform went to serve in Desert Storm. That is one million barrels a day.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for OPEC to do right by the American consumers. It is time for OPEC to do right by the consumers of south Arkansas. Increase production, increase production now.

In addition to pressuring OPEC to increase production, we must also work with U.S. oil producers to increase their dangerously low levels of oil inventories. Our nation lacks the refinery capacity to keep up with current de-

mand for oil and gas. We should work to streamline regulatory requirements to facilitate investment in new refineries and other improvements to our energy infrastructure, and I urge the Administration to work with our current domestic refineries to increase their inventories of refined gasoline.

But we cannot stop there. We need a balanced, proactive national energy policy—one that serves as an energy plan for the future that not only increases energy production, but also decreases energy demand. We must work to decrease our dependence on foreign oil through conservation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency programs.

In the short term, we should look at ways to guard our consumers against potential price gouging by the big oil companies. For our home heating oil consumers, we should also look at incentives to encourage consumers to make energy efficient improvements to their homes, and we must make sure that we fully fund the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The money we invest in this program will be put right back into the economy through lower heating and fuel bills.

In May, President Bush announced his Administration's plan to address our nation's current energy crisis, a plan for that calls for major increases in oil and gas production in the United States. I agree with the Administration that we need to increase production, but I believe their proposal is a plan for the past that seems to cater to the big oil companies.

I am disappointed that their plan does not do more to support programs to increase research and development in new energy technologies that increase conservation and alternative and renewable fuel sources to reduce our oil dependence. This may not be an immediate answer, but it is certainly important for the long-term as fossil fuel sources diminish. Surely, if we can create the technology to send a man to the moon, we can develop a crop that our farmers can grow that can provide an efficient and affordable alternative source for fuel.

Our current energy situation is a complicated problem with no easy answers, but it is of critical importance to the people of south Arkansas and across America. The sooner we take action, the sooner we can see results at the pump. I urge my colleagues to support a balanced, proactive, and bipartisan solution to this crisis so that we can bring relief to our hard working families.

A TRIBUTE TO FIREFIGHTER JOHN J. DOWNING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GRUCCI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRUCCI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a heavy heart to express my deepest sympathies and that of a grateful community to the Downing family and to pay honor and tribute to a true American hero, firefighter John J. Downing of Port Jefferson Station, New York.

On June 17, 2001, John Downing and 350 of his fellow firefighters and numerous police officers responded to a 2:19

p.m. call to a 911 that sent them to Long Island General Supply Company in Queens, New York. As is always the case, these brave men and women responded without reservation and with little or no regard for their personal safety. By 3 p.m., the blaze had gone to 5 alarms, and the fire and explosion had turned the 128-year-old Long Island General Supply Company into a horrific scene.

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By 8 p.m. the fire had been controlled, but at a tragic cost: three firefighters lost their lives. Additionally, two civilians and dozens of firefighters were injured.

The three brave men were firefighters John J. Downing of Port Jefferson Station, from Ladder Company 163; Harry Ford, of Long Beach; and Brian Fahey of East Rockaway, both of Rescue 4 unit.

My constituent, John Downing, leaves his wife of 11 years; a daughter, Joanne; and a son, Michael. John Downing was one of seven children from Woodside. He went to elementary school at St. Sebastian School in Woodside, and then to high school in St. Francis Preparatory School in Fresh Meadows. He later went on to work in the construction field before becoming a firefighter 11 years ago.

John Downing and all three of his brothers gave back to the community through public service. He and his brother Denis both became firefighters, Denis Downing now at Ladder Company 160 in Long Island City, and James and Joseph Downing are New York City police officers.

Everyone who knew John called him a hero in every sense of the word. Every day he was on the job for the past 11 years as a firefighter. John always gave his all and did his best. Whether it was in fighting fires or helping young firefighters to learn their job better, everyone in the firehouse knew they could count on John.

Knowing this, it was no surprise when firefighter Downing appeared on the front pages of the New York Daily News 3 years ago. He was pictured on the front page as a hero once again, rescuing passengers from a commercial jet that had gone off the runway at LaGuardia Airport and into the chilling waters of Flushing Bay.

Firefighting was not John's entire life, though. He was a family man, dotting over his two children and devoted to his wife. In recent weeks he had been working a second job to bring his family on their first real summer vacation to Ireland, to visit the relatives of his family and his wife's. Sadly, when the alarm for his last fire came, John was 2 hours away from ending his shift and beginning that vacation.

As the alarm went off, John put down the study book he had been reading, preparing to take the exam to become

a lieutenant in the fire department. He grabbed his gear, and with the last full measure of devotion and commitment, John and his colleagues answered their last call.

Today John and his colleagues are in the loving embrace of God. I ask my colleagues to please join me in extending our deepest sympathies to the families of these three brave heroes and in recognizing the brave sacrifices of a true hero, John J. Downing.

CHANGE IN ENERGY REGULATION POLICY BY THE FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION COINCIDES WITH SWITCH IN CONTROL OF U.S. SENATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Illinois). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, 6 months ago the staff of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission found that the prices being charged for power in the western United States were neither just nor reasonable. The law would require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to then take action to both lower the prices and to order rebates for market manipulation, price-gouging, price-fixing that was going on.

But under the leadership of Mr. Hebert, chair of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, appointed by President Bush, FERC did nothing. They said there was not really a problem, this was just the market sending us a signal. What was the signal? Billions of dollars extracted from ratepayers, residential ratepayers, small business and big businesses alike; rolling blackouts and brownouts in California; incredibly high wholesale prices in the Pacific Northwest, with prices up to one hundred times, one hundred times what was charged just 2 years ago in the wholesale market.

But it also meant up to 1,000 percent, a 1,000 percent increase in profits for a handful of energy companies, most of whom happened to be based in Texas, and most of whom happened to be very generous contributors both to this administration and to the majority party in this House.

Mr. Hebert said no action was necessary, that he would do nothing. At one meeting, he opined that he would pray for us; faith-based regulation, I guess. But something changed all of a sudden; being stonewalled for months and months; his own staff saying the law was being violated; being sued; being petitioned by Members of Congress, by constituents, businesses desperate for relief.

On Monday they held an emergency meeting. What changed? What could have brought that about? Did they finally read their own staff reports, fi-

nally recognize the market manipulation? No, what changed is one vote in the United States Senate. Suddenly, there were committees in the Senate with the capability of investigating what was going on, and they scheduled hearings for tomorrow to bring in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to have the Chairman explain how it is his staff found things to be unjust and unreasonable, but he said that there was no problem.

Under that threat, they have adopted some half measures; better than nothing, but not much. They are going to peg prices to the least efficient, the most expensive unit, most obsolete generating unit operating. It is better than what has been going on today, with prices up to \$4,000 a megawatt hour. Maybe we will get it down to \$200 or \$300. That is still ten times what the market provided for just 2 years ago.

They will extend it across the entire western United States, which will offer some relief to my part of the country in the Pacific Northwest.

They did admit the price-gouging and market manipulation had gone on and that refunds were due, but they set up some sort of voluntary settlement process to try and extract the billions of dollars back from these Texas-based energy conglomerates.

That is not going to work. They need to use their authority to order the refunds, and they need to set the amount of the refunds.

Then, finally, they said it would only last through a year from next October; that is, two summers for California, two peak seasons, but only one peak season for my part of the country. This will still cost consumers hundreds of millions, ultimately billions of dollars more than they need to pay to have reliable energy in the western U.S. It will still put untold hundreds of millions and billions of dollars into the pockets of market manipulators. It is just that the profits will not be a 1,000 percent increase anymore, it might only be a 200 percent increase or 300 percent increase for those companies based in Texas who have been contributing so generously to the majority party in this administration.

But they had to do something, because they might lose their whole scam, their whole game. The heart of it is deregulation. Deregulation does not work in a monopoly environment. It does not work when there are a few plants and one big set of transmission wires that runs down to smaller wires that run to our house.

How are we going to have competition? Competition could never work, will never work in this industry. It is a vital public necessity. For more than 60 years we regulated in this country because of the collapse the last time we played with deregulation in the United States, back in the 1920s.